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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SS-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DRL-02
	G-00	SAS-00		/005W			

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O 201935Z SEP 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7803
INFO NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

UNCLAS CARACAS 002939

SENSITIVE

NSC FOR LLORENS
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA COUP RUMORS 9/19: ONE CIVILIAN DETAINED

REF: CARACAS 2927

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: COUP SPECULATION INTENSIFIED LATE SEPTEMBER 19,
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BUT RESULTED IN NEITHER THE GOV NOR THE OPPOSITION MOVING AGAINST
THE OTHER. CHAVEZ PUBLICLY WARNED "DESPERATE GROUPS" AGAINST COUP
ATTEMPTS AND CONFIRMED THE ARREST OF ONE CIVILIAN. THE GOV DECREED
EIGHT "SECURITY ZONES" IN CARACAS: SIX AROUND KEY MILITARY SITES,
AS WELL AS THE STATE-OWNED TELEVISION AND RADIO STATIONS. AS OF
MID-DAY SEPTEMBER 20, NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS WERE MOVING TO STAFF
THE EIGHT AREAS AND THE ORGANIZERS OF THE PROTEST PLANNED FOR ONE
OF THE LOCATIONS WERE DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVES WITH THE
AUTHORITIES. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT EIGHT MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE
BEEN SUMMONED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE MILITARY PROSECUTOR FOR ACTIONS
RELATED TO THE EVENTS OF APRIL 11. ANTI-CHAVEZ "PROJECT
VENEZUELA" LEADER HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER WAS ATTACKED AT A CEREMONY
COMMEMORATING THE GROUP'S FOUNDING; HE LATER BLAMED GOV-PAID THUGS
FOR THE INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 25 APR 2005 200400109

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2. (SBU) SEVERAL DAYS OF INTENSE SPECULATION IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE THAT GOV AND OPPOSITION ACTIONS WERE IMMINENT (REFTEL) HAVE PASSED WITH NEITHER THE GOV NOR THE OPPOSITION MOVING AGAINST THE OTHER AS THE RUMOR MILL FORETOLD. CAPPING A DAY OF SWIRLING RUMORS LATE SEPTEMBER 19, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ADDRESSED A (FRIENDLY) GATHERING OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES IN CARACAS AND WARNED "DESPERATE GROUPS" AGAINST ANY ATTEMPT TO FOMENT REBELLION AGAINST THE GOV. HE CONFIRMED THE ARREST EARLIER IN THE DAY OF ALEJANDRO PENA ESCLUSA, A LEADER OF THE "SOLIDARITY FORCE," THE ORGANIZATION BEHIND AN ANTI-CHAVEZ CIVIL-MILITARY DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE AT CARACAS'S LA CARLOTA AIRBASE ON THE AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 20. CHAVEZ ALLEGED THAT PENA ESCLUSA -- WHOSE RECENT AD IN A MAJOR DAILY URGED THE MILITARY TO "ACT NOW" -- HAD BEEN FOMENTING A MILITARY COUP. COMPLICATING THE SITUATION, THE MILITARY PROSECUTOR REPORTEDLY SUMMONED EIGHT MILITARY OFFICERS TO APPEAR IN RESPONSE TO THEIR ACTIONS DURING THE EVENTS OF APRIL 11.

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3. (U) THE GOV COUNCIL OF MINISTERS RECENTLY DECREED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EIGHT "SECURITY ZONES" IN CARACAS: THE AIRBASE AT LA CARLOTA; LA CASONA PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE; NAVY HEADQUARTERS AT SAN BERNARDINO; CAGIGAL OBSERVATORY; NATIONAL GUARD HEADQUARTERS AT EL PARAISO; FUERTE TIUNA MILITARY BASE; RADIO VENEZUELA; AND VENEZUELAN T.V. THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR SUBSEQUENTLY INSTRUCTED "SOLIDARITY FORCE" TO RE-ROUTE ITS DEMONSTRATION (PLANNED FOR 1600 HOURS ON SEPTEMBER 20) AWAY FROM LA CARLOTA; "SOLIDARITY FORCE" REPORTEDLY IS DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVES WITH THE AUTHORITIES.

4. (U) ON SEPTEMBER 19, COLONEL JULIO RODRIGUEZ SALAS, WHO HAD CUSTODY OF CHAVEZ AFTER THE LATTER'S BRIEF OUSTER IN APRIL, PUBLICLY ACCUSED MILITARY INTELLIGENCE (DIM) OF HARASSING AND THREATENING RODRIGUEZ AND HIS WIFE ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS IN RECENT MONTHS. ON SEPTEMBER 19, "PROJECT VENEZUELA" FOUNDER HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER AND SUPPORTERS WERE JEERED AND STONED BY PRO-CHAVEZ PARTISANS DURING A WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY IN PLAZA BOLIVAR TO COMMEMORATE THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GROUP'S FOUNDING. A MAN BROKE THROUGH SALAS ROMER'S SECURITY CORDON AND STRUCK HIM SAVAGELY ON THE HEAD WITH A FRAGMENT OF CEMENT. THE INJURED SALAS ROMER SUBSEQUENTLY BLAMED GOVERNMENT-PAID THUGS FOR THE INCIDENT. A SUSPECT WAS APPREHENDED.

5. (U) VICE PRESIDENT RANGEL TOLD THE PRESS (AND THE AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY) THAT THE RUMORS OF MASSIVE ARRESTS ON SEPTEMBER 19 WERE UNFOUNDED. HE SAID ONLY ONE INDIVIDUAL HAD BEEN ARRESTED: PENA ESCLUSA. RUMOR HAD EVERYONE FROM THE CARDINAL TO CTV PRESIDENT ORTEGA UNDER ARREST. SHAPIRO

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